



# CommunityCORE

*Bookmobile and Lunchbox: An Exercise in Rural Engagement*

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2014

## PREFACE

A relative of mine always used to say, “God gave people hands, so that they can help themselves.” While that statement was made with the intent of instilling a sense of work ethic in a formative child, it also charged me with the eye to see and wonder why some never seemed able to “help” themselves. As time went on I began to understand that we are more affected by the situations that we are born into than the opportunities that we create for ourselves. It was with this realization that I could fully appreciate the situation and contribution that all persons are capable of, given the proper chance. Bookmobile and Lunchbox seek to nurture the life-chances of Rural Northern Jackson County, and unearth the potential of its citizenry. It is with this in mind that I revise the phrase to, “God gave people hands, so that they can lend them to a neighbor.”

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## WEEKLY JOURNALS

Each entry focuses on one responsibility/major project of the week. The project for each week centers around one of the three programs, the Bookmobile, the Lunchbox, or the main body of CommunityCORE. Many times duties from different programs overlap and are being performed in the periphery of the highlighted project.

### ***May 28, 2014: The Bookmobile's First Run***

Today the Bookmobile made its first run! We were all very excited and, to be honest, a little bit nervous. On Staff we had Ange Allen, Jessica Karns, Lori Messer, Aidan Allen, Luke Schreiber, Ross Allen, Quinn Allen, and myself, Zev Allen. We found out this morning that our reader and craft coordinator for the day, Amy Miaers (JH Art Teacher), had to cancel. We silently hoped that this was not an indication of how the day would continue. Our first stop was at Whiting (See "Bookmobile Schedule" in "Special Documents"). We arrived at the initial site about 45 minutes early to set up (See "Bookmobile Checklist" for details); everyone kept checking their watches, agonizing over the little details, and rethinking all of the months of planning. Our greatest fear was that no one would show, but within the first five minutes those fears were dispelled as the hustle and bustle of distributing Lunchboxes, checking out books, and interacting with the participants filled the front lawn of Whiting Baptist Church. The day continued in much the same way throughout the rest of the sites, Netawaka, Circleville, and Soldier. We made up for the Story Time Reader's absence with an impromptu reading of "Woolbur" and sidewalk chalking. We were overwhelmed by the support and attendance from the day, we had 118 new participants throughout the four stops. Now while that may not seem



like a lot, the average population of the four towns is approximately 150. We are very hopeful for what the Summer will hold!

#### ***June 4, 2014: Renovation of the Bookmobile***

The focus of this week will be on renovating the Bookmobile. When we first got the Bookmobile back in April, we were thrilled with it's potential. We were however a little less than enthused with the amount of reconstruction that was going to be necessary. Fortunately we had all of the necessary know-how and equipment to meet the demands of the job. We spent several weekends gutting the existing design, removing appliances, tearing up old flooring, and repairing all of the holes left by demolition. (See Presentation for Pictures) We then began work on painting the interior; we had substantial help from family, friends, and neighbors that just wanted to get involved. Next came replacing light fixtures, installing shelves, and laying new flooring and trim. My Grandma Andra upholstered the benches, sewed throw pillows, and made checkout bags to be clipped to clotheslines to act as curtains. As far as the interior goes we have nearly everything settled; we only need to replace the air-conditioning unit and add a book rack next to the circulation desk.

While the interior came off without much of a hitch, the exterior has proven to be quite difficult. Its original paint job consisted of brown, turquoise, and beige, hues that are a not exactly inviting or representative of the spirit that the Bookmobile needed to embody. Branding is very important, and we didn't want to start off on the wrong foot. We brainstormed ways of covering up the previous paint job, but all thoughts seemed inadequate. We knew that we had to repaint the trailer, however; we did not know of anyone with the expertise. It was early-mid May when we heard that a local lady, Cindy Martin, had some experience. In true small-town fashion, a friend had known a friend who knew Cindy, we contacted her within the week. Cindy is a

freelance artist from the Havensville area that specializes in murals. (Her work can be found at the Oz Museum among other places.) She knew exactly how to strip the previous coat of paint, the best sort of primer to use, and most importantly a special type of paint that can be layered over before curing itself. We began stripping the original coat of paint with a special chemical and wire brushes; this process took nearly two full days of scrubbing. We then set to work on priming the entirety of the Bookmobile. Nearly half of the family was out to help with the initial coat, My six siblings (including myself), my Parents, Aunt Lori, Cousin Caitlin, her boyfriend (and Family Friend) Trent Henry, Kay Messer, Aunt Paula, and Grandma Andra were all there to support the effort in one way or another. We pulled the trailer into our shed to give it one day to dry; Cindy came on that day and made some sketches. We had given her full rein, and she was terribly excited to let us know that we were doing a Jungle Theme. The very next day Cindy was there bright and early rearing to go. She had us start with a base coat of dark green and a sky of light-blue. This initial process took about three coats of paint and a day and a half. Our younger volunteers (My youngest brother and sister) were dying to see an animal or two appear, but the rest of us were just happy to have the fresh coat before the Bookmobile's First Run. Thus far their wish has been granted as Cindy has begun to slowly add some color to the landscape. (See Gorilla in Presentation) Cindy has recently been hired to add another Mural to the Oz Museum, so her time on the Bookmobile has been limited, but we are so very grateful for all the time and talent that she has volunteered. As mentioned before, Cindy's recommendation that we use the self-curing paint has been a Godsend; it has allowed us to make the paint job an ongoing project. (See "Bookmobile Checklist: Upon Return Home") When we get home after several hours on dusty roads, we merely wash down the Bookmobile, dry it off, and Store it in the Shed for the convenient spare hour that Cindy might happen upon throughout her week. This project has

made me see how truly blessed we have been throughout this project; we have caught a lot of breaks that were integral in the completion of this project.

### ***June 11, 2014 Dollar General Shopping Spree***

This week in particular has been a BLAST! I will preface the details of our fun with a little exposition. When the Bookmobile was naught but a twinkle in our eye and a dream in our heads, we realized that we were going to need individuals with strong backgrounds in books. Naturally, we sought out our local school librarian, Ms. Jessica Karns, Ms. Karns was thrilled with the idea and immediately partnered with CORE to make this dream a reality. At that point the only books that we had secured were donations, most of which had been dearly loved and relegated to soggy basements. We mostly had westerns, classics, and some poetry, but nothing new that would captivate young readers. Ms. Karns realized our predicament and immediately set out in search of monetary avenues that we might venture down. One such avenue that she happened upon was a grant from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation. She applied on behalf of the Bookmobile and received the grant valued at \$1,500. At the time the grant was gifted CommunityCORE had not yet been given full Non-Profit status so the money was channeled through the Jackson Heights Education Foundation. All of this coming to a head with the DOLLAR GENERAL SHOPPING SPREE! On Sunday afternoon we headed for the Topeka Barnes and Noble for some book buying madness. Everyone involved with the Bookmobile has a deep seeded love for literacy and has frequented many a bookstore with the dream of snatching up every book that caught our eye. This was a day where that which is conceptual and that which is tangible met. At first we were just a bit nervous as we gingerly strolled down aisle upon aisle of books. All shoppers involved were being as frugal as possible, and kept consulting Ms. Karns, "Would a kid today read this?" After about two hours of perusing, we gathered everything on a

Dolly (See Photos in Presentation) and did a check-in at the cash-register. We had only spent a little under a third of the money. It was such a great time reminiscing over some of our favorite reads from our childhood. Joking about reading phases: “The Berenstain Bears”, “Chicken Noodle Soup for the Teenage Soul”, “Nancy Drew”, “The Twilight Saga”, “Hank the Cowdog”, “Harry Potter”, and “The Magic Treehouse”. We all relived the countless hours of adventure and excitement that young readers experience and tried to imagine what new reads could create that passion for the young readers of Jackson County. After another four hours, we had completed the Spree and were fairly impressed as we surveyed our haul over McDonald’s ice cream cones, about 215 books in all. We have substantially beefed up our young reader bins, filled in the cracks of the Young Adult section, and offered a facelift to the wrinkles in our adult shelves. Overall a most satisfying experience that reminded us of the gift of reading.

### ***June 18, 2014 Cataloging***

This week was a bit like cleaning up after Christmas morning. We have all of the shiny new presents lying around, but a terrible mess of wrapping paper, dirty dishes, and other fragments of a joyous morning to clean-up after. Now that we have the books, we have been charged with the monstrous task of integrating them into our circulation system. This past year the Jackson Heights High School updated their Library System that exists in the “cloud” of the interwebs. In this new system they are allowed to create multiple “libraries”, so in this partnership Ms. Karns allowed us to use the account in order to catalog and checkout the Bookmobile books. Cataloging is a fairly extensive process that requires a good deal of focus, diligence, and determination, qualities that I have adopted very recently (Allow me a mirthless chuckle!). Ms. Karns showed us the ropes, and we took off running like a herd of turtles, making Rookie mistakes and praying that we hadn’t unearthed the system. Using a vast library

circulation network, Library World shares information on books from various libraries throughout the country. We add a copy to our virtual library and give our physical copy a unique barcode. After printing the various stickers for barcodes, call numbers, and "Property of..." we preserved the books with all sorts of sticky contact papers, clear plastics, and book tapes, tools of a most unusual torture. We were desperately trying to ensure that we had at least half of our new purchases ready for the Bookmobile's next run. In reality the task wasn't that bad; I actually rather enjoyed it. While cataloging, the crew of volunteers had a chance to chat. As with most organizations that I have been involved with, it is the people that make the work worth the while.

***June 25, 2014: Soldier Gym Work Day***

The Soldier Gym was once the epicenter of vitality for the Soldier Community, there are countless stories that I've heard from past students reminiscing over 60 year old memories. It is for these reasons in part that the Gym was selected to become the headquarters of CORE. Since its closing the Gym has passed from owner to owner each using it in much the same way as the last, as a personal dumping ground. Upon purchasing the Gym, we had a work day a year ago. In that day we cleaned out the main Gymnasium, so a professional could come through and ensure its safety. Since then due to a lack of funding, the Gym has sat undisturbed. However, at the end of this last April the Soldier Alumni had their Reunion, and they donated \$450. About a month later another private donor came through with funds to fix the roof, \$14,000! We were thrilled to see such support, and began to prepare the Gym. Preparations required another Clean-Up day. (See Presentation for Before and After Pictures) We recruited about 20 volunteers for the day. Our goals made the North and South Locker Rooms, the Basement Kitchen, and the main area of the Basement the priorities for the day. We split into four different groups and began to haul out the junk. CORE provided recycling bins, scrap metal piles, and dump trucks for everything to be

sorted into. At noon we had a potluck lunch provided by Mrs. Andra Holliday and Mrs. Ange Allen (Grandma and Mother respectively). It was about a ten hour work day when all was said and done. We were hot and tired, but also impressed by the amount of work that had been accomplished. Now CORE's motto is, "Live, Work, Play, and Grow", and over the course of the day we had covered all but one of those categories. At about six o'clock we all piled onto the back of an old pickup truck and headed over to the swimming hole along Soldier Creek. It was such good time swimming in the creek. Children and adults alike just floating on inner tubes, shooting from a rope swing, and waging great, "Mud Wars". Community is built in these moments; I shall cherish this one.

#### ***July 2, 2014: Meeting with City Council***

This week we met with the Soldier City Council. We were presenting them with an update on our progress with the Kan-Step Grant Application. The Council is very protective of the City, and they only act after much deliberation. I tend to walk away from these meetings with a bit of frustration. Ultimately I feel that this frustration stems from a lack of clear communication. I think that we find our middle ground in our shared love for Soldier, but there is a breakdown in communicating what action plan they would prefer we take. Leadership requires a great deal of give and take. It is hard to work with people that only see problems and never any solutions.

#### ***July 9, 2014: Soldier Fair***

The Soldier Fair is always the highlight of the year, on this single day Soldier's population about doubles as family, friends, and neighbors from everywhere come for the Fair. The Fair is organized and run by the 4-H club, the Volunteer Fire Department, the City Council, and CORE. The evening starts off with the Parade, local businesses, churches, politicians, clubs,



and all sorts of organizations put together floats. The Bookmobile has an entry in the Parade as well. Children line the four blocks of Soldier's Main Street all ready for some candy! After the Parade there is a free-will donation dinner served in the Hall to support the 4-H Club. The streets are then blocked off, and the street games begin. There is an egg toss, a watermelon seed spitting contest, a water-balloon toss, and many other games. The contestants are sectioned off by age and the winners receive a round of applause from the on looking crowd. The City Council sponsors the Horse Shoe pits, and the Fire Department sells homemade Ice Cream. The evening slows down a bit as the variety show keys up the music, and the carnival games kick in. The carnival games that you can win prizes at cost a dollar to play, but there are also inflatables that children can play on for free. Once the variety show is over, CORE hosts a movie for the community on an outdoor projector. We hand out popcorn and enjoy the summer evening. It is on nights like these that time just seems to stand still. The air hangs thick and humid all around, but the conversations just roll along with the film reel. People take their minds off of business, the farm, and other worries of the day, and they just relax.

***July 16, 2014: Kan-Step Public Hearing***

This week we had our public hearing for the Kan-Step Application. The public hearing was just a step in the process of the application. The hearing is set up in an open forum format; we had about 30 individuals present. We had attendants who have lived in Soldier their entire lives, there were Alumni of the High school, and individuals with businesses operating in or around Soldier. The Kan-Step Grant is sponsored by the Kansas Department of Commerce, and would provide \$300,000 to the development of Soldier. For the most part, the forum was mainly a question and answer session; Luke Schreiber presented on the mission of CORE and facilitated the opening comments. The floor was then opened up to anyone with concerns or comments.

Overall it was a very productive meeting; we really cleared up some of those miscommunications that we had earlier with the City Council. There had been some uncertainty about the timeline, and we were able to better communicate the expectations of the Department of Commerce. Dissenting opinions were borne out of a deep hurt that previous Alumni had felt when they lost the school the first time. They really just don't want to have to lose it again, and it is that same level of commitment that will ensure they won't have to.

***July 23, 2014: Jackson County Parade and Public Support***

This week was the Jackson County Fair; it is a huge event that lasts a week long. It is much bigger than Soldier's, but it is definitely much more impersonal. The Bookmobile had made a run on Wednesday, so we had to clean it up for the Parade. As we wound through all of the streets of the parade's route, we were thrilled to see the impact the Bookmobile had made. Throughout people from all around called out their thanks. Participants proudly displayed their shirts as we passed by. It has been a real blessing. Public support has also been present in donations of books. Because of the generous amount of books we have received, we were able to initiate the Grab and Go program of the Bookmobile. Grab and Go is an awesome feature the the Bookmobile offers; it is an exchange program. If a participant finds a book that they absolutely love, we want them to take that book home and make it a part of their collection. We also want to encourage patrons to give back to the Bookmobile and perpetuate the program. Another benefit is that it allows us to send books home with patrons with overdue books. We realize that often time's parental support isn't present, and we don't want to withhold any chance of reading from a student. We were able to provide an alternative to check-out. Grab and Go's have been a wild success all thanks to the help and support of our friends and neighbors.



### ***July 30, 2014: The Presenters, Site Coordinators, and Volunteers***

I would like to take this week to thank our volunteers. We have been truly overwhelmed by their support, work ethic, and passion for their community. I have mentioned many of our volunteers previously, but I would like to recognize several other key players. Most of our Story-time Presenters are educators of some sort. These individuals have dedicated their lives to working with kids, and it was a real privilege getting to work with them. Our Presenters included: Janice Mulroy, Kay Smith, Carrie Holliday, Jessica Karns, Carol Fenton, Luke Schrieber, Diane Keeler, and Adrienne Walsh. (Additional weeks covered by Bookmobile/CORE team.) Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude toward our Site Coordinators for the Lunchbox program throughout the four Communities: Seth Montgomery: Whiting, Caroline Keithline: Netawaka, Andra Holliday: Circleville, and Ida Nedau: Soldier. These individuals were wonderful about contacting patrons, distributing Lunchboxes, and being responsible, knowledgeable points of contact. Finally, I would like to thank all of the general volunteers for their work on the Gym, their help packing/distributing Lunchboxes, and renovating/staffing the Bookmobile. We couldn't have done it without their help. It is truly inspiring to see members of the community buying-into the cause. It is heartening to see physical support, to witness the power of community, and to observe the capacity people have to care.

### ***August 6, 2014 Lunchbox Operations Overview***

I would like to take this opportunity to elaborate on the operations of the Lunchbox and give an overview of the summer. Our partnership with the United Way Foundation of Greater Topeka, which serves Jackson County, began in May. We received a grant from them for \$7,500 in order to purchase shelf stable groceries for at-need families. We then moved to partner with Harvesters in order to purchase these shelf stable goods at a greatly reduced price; thus having to

go through their approval process. The application required basic information regarding the services to be provided and goals of the program. Upon approval, we were recognized as a Partnering Agency of Harvesters and an operating Food Pantry. Jackson Heights allowed us to use one of their classrooms as a Store Room. This proved ideal being that it was the central most location of the four communities and provided spacious accommodations for the program. Food was ordered online through the Harvesters website; Harvesters' inventory varied based upon donations that were received. After the first couple of weeks of ordering, we were better able to gauge the availability of various commodities. This understanding allowed us to set a loose framework for the meal plan of the summer. We realized that many of our families-served had two parents that worked during the day leaving an older sibling to feed and care for younger siblings, so we focused in on that perspective and strategized accordingly. When setting the meal plan, we took into account factors regarding: Nutrition, ease of preparation, and versatility of the items. Our shipments arrived bimonthly. Pallets were unloaded from the truck by the Harvester's truck drivers, and we broke down the pallets from there into our storeroom. Each packing sessions typically takes about 4-6 hours. Packing sessions are staffed by about 4-6 Volunteers and organized into three groups. The first individual is responsible for stocking the main tables along the back of the room. They are in charge of keeping the inventory table full and boxes about the room broken down. Next we have the pullers. They are responsible for knowing the day's menu and collecting the correct amount of items for the various boxes. Packers take the items that the Pullers group together and place them in the bags. Finally the Marker goes along and ensures that we have the correct number of boxes for each community. They mark the boxes and store them for transport. (See "Set-Up for Lunchbox Store Room") Over the course of the

summer we served 102 unduplicated participants and distributed 14,000 pounds of food, 137.25 lbs per participant, for a value of \$73.53 per child.

### ***August 13, 2014 Last Day of Bookmobile***

Today was the last day of the Bookmobile. In all honesty it was really bitter sweet. It's such a relief to have had a successful summer under our belts, but at the same time we were very sad to be putting it away. It has been a very long summer full of late nights, early mornings, getting on nerves, and struggling to find the middle ground, but I wouldn't have traded it for anything. Ross, my brother, and I ran across a word at the beginning of the summer, and it has seemed to stick throughout these long days. The word, bucolic, meaning, "of or relating to the pleasant aspects of the countryside and country life." As we packed up our final run, that word just kept running through my mind. Family and friends all stood around chatting about the upcoming school year, a pair of farmers sipping sweet tea and talking about the forecast, children running about the playground screaming gleefully, neighbors driving by and stopping in the middle of the road to say, "Hi", the gentle zephyrs running through the trees and clearing out the stiff afternoon air; I was just overwhelmed by how truly fortunate I am. Many would happen upon this scene and be very bored by it all, dismissing it as out of date and irrelevant, but they don't see what I see. There is excitement in watching the steady march of time, there is joy in knowing every passerby, and there is virtue in the sweat of a hard day's work. These are the people that I love, in the place that I love, and I have been blessed by them.

### ***Reflection***

I definitely feel that I have learned a lot this summer. Not only have I worked on practicing leadership, but I have also observed some of the finer points of organizational development and conflict management. Challenges that we faced this summer primarily

stemmed from the fact that we hadn't ever run these programs before. Looking forward we are going to be focusing on sustainability of our programs as well as CORE. We want CommunityCORE to be something that can be transplanted to other communities in need of a little TLC, and in that thought we are working to systematically write our administrative materials for general use. More than anything I am hopeful; I can't wait to see what next summer holds!

## Special Documents

<b><u>Story Time</u></b>	<b><u>Location</u></b>	<b><u>Check-Out</u></b>
<b>9:00 AM</b>	<b>Whiting Baptist Church</b>	<b>8:30 am to 10:00am</b>
<b>11:00 AM</b>	<b>Netawaka Community Building</b>	<b>10:30 pm to 12:00 pm</b>
<b>1:00 PM</b>	<b>CirclevilleChristian Church</b>	<b>12:30 pm to 2:00pm</b>
<b>3:00 PM</b>	<b>Soldier City Hall</b>	<b>2:30 pm to 4:00 pm</b>

## **Bookmobile Checklist**

### **Day Before/Prior to Leaving**

- ☐ Load Lunchboxes into Vehicles in the Bookmobile Caravan
- ☐ Pull specially Requested Books from Library
- ☐ Check WiFi Hotspot, Laptop, and Barcode Scanner
- ☐ Fuel-Up Towing Vehicle
- ☐ Attach Bookmobile to Towing Vehicle
- ☐ Ensure Story-Time is Prepared

### **Upon Arrival at Site**

- ☐ Lower Stabilizing Jacks
- ☐ Run Power to Bookmobile
- ☐ Unfold Stairs
- ☐ Get Fans and AC Running
- ☐ Set-Up Circulation Table
- ☐ Key Up Laptop and *LibraryWorld* (Website used for Circulation)
- ☐ Check Over Attendance Sticker Chart
- ☐ Set Out Story Rugs and Reader's Stool
- ☐ Set Out Sidewalk Chalk and Toy Basket for younger kids
- ☐ Unload Lunchboxes into Drop-Off Site
- ☐ Set Up Story-Time

### **Checkout Begins**

- ☐ Checkout/Checkin Books
- ☐ Reshelf Books Checked In
- ☐ Take Requests for Books to be Pulled for next week
- ☐ Deliver Lunchboxes to Patron's
- ☐ Story Time/Snack Time and Craft
- ☐ Interact with Participants

**(Repeat/Undo "Upon Arrival at Site" and "Checkout Begins" for every Site)**

### **Upon Return Home**

- ☐ Compile List of Books to be Pulled
- ☐ Detach Bookmobile from Transport Vehicle
- ☐ Check All equipment to Ensure Powered Down and Stored Properly
- ☐ Wash Down the Exterior of Bookmobile
- ☐ Dry-Off Bookmobile with Rags
- ☐ Store Bookmobile in Shed for Painting
- ☐ Straighten shelves, tidy floor, and secure Circulation Table



## **The Bookmobile RECEIVES \$1,500 GRANT FROM THE DOLLAR GENERAL LITERACY FOUNDATION TO SUPPORT SUMMER LITERACY**

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation awarded The Bookmobile a \$1,500 grant to support summer literacy.

"We're grateful for the support," said Jessica Karns, local librarian. "We welcome any opportunity to encourage literacy – especially during the summer months. If we can get kids excited about books, it translates to success in the classroom."

"At Dollar General, we are passionate about our mission of *Serving Others* throughout the communities we serve," said Rick Dreiling, Dollar General's chairman and CEO. "It's exciting to see the Dollar General Literacy Foundation's outreach in action as we partner with organizations to further education and literacy and make a real difference in people's lives."

The Bookmobile, a project of CommunityCORE, serves the communities of Whiting, Netawaka, Circleville and Soldier.

The Dollar General Literacy Foundation is proud to support initiatives that help others improve their lives through literacy and education. Since its inception in 1993, the Dollar General Literacy Foundation has awarded more than \$92 million in grants to nonprofit organizations, helping more than five million individuals take their first steps toward literacy or continued education. For more information about the Dollar General Literacy Foundation and its grant programs, visit [www.dgliteracy.org](http://www.dgliteracy.org).

### ***About Dollar General Corporation***

Dollar General Corporation has been delivering value to shoppers for 75 years. Dollar General helps shoppers Save time. Save money. Every day!® by offering products that are frequently used and replenished, such as food, snacks, health and beauty aids, cleaning supplies, basic apparel, house wares and seasonal items at low everyday prices in convenient neighborhood locations. With 11,000 stores in 40 states, Dollar General has more retail locations than any retailer in America. In addition to high quality private brands, Dollar General sells products from America's most-trusted manufacturers such as Procter & Gamble, Kimberly-Clark, Unilever, Kellogg's, General Mills, Nabisco, Hanes, PepsiCo and Coca-Cola. Learn more about Dollar General at [www.dollargeneral.com](http://www.dollargeneral.com).

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## Midterm Outputs Report for Jackson Heights Education Foundation: Lunchbox Program

### **Client Demographics:**

The Lunchbox program is currently serving 102 unduplicated clients that represent 41 households. Participants include sixty-two males and forty females ranging in age from 0-17 years. Client ethnicity was not collected. While we did not require specific financial information from each individual participant, we know that based on the guidelines to receive free or reduced meals through the public school system, all of the clients are at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.

### **Program Data:**

A basic program structure for the Jackson County Basic Needs Grant application was developed to apply for the grant. Once the grant was awarded, Lunchbox program volunteers created all guideline, application and promotional materials. Implementation efforts included partnering with Jackson Heights to enroll clients. Efforts to reach and enroll eligible students included letters mailed to the homes of eligible students, notes sent home with eligible students, reminders to enroll included on the weekly calendar that is distributed to all students, and a staffed display with enrollment that was available at the Elementary spring field day.

The Lunchbox applied for and became a Harvesters Agency Member in May, allowing for the purchase of food staples at a greatly reduced cost. Volunteers were trained to access the Harvesters website to order food and submit monthly reports to Harvesters. Volunteers unload, stock and sort the weekly boxes for delivery. Site volunteers were secured to assist with food distribution. It should be noted that JCMA food pantry was very instrumental in sharing information and guidance as the Lunchbox program was developed and implemented.

The Lunchbox service began on May 28, 2014. Currently there are 102 children enrolled. In seven weeks of service, 714 boxes have been distributed. The program is on track to distribute 1,224 boxes of food which falls slightly short of the proposed outcomes of 129 enrollees/1,528 food boxes. The benefit has been that each lunchbox has a weekly value of \$6.13 vs. \$4.84 proposal.

While we could reiterate the statistical achievements of the Lunchbox, we feel the real program achievement lies in the service to our recipients. Statements from families served include: "When I opened our first box I just cried. We wouldn't have made it through the Summer without the Lunchbox", "You don't know what a relief it is to not have to worry about how you are going to feed your kids... Thank you!", "Thank you so much for what you are doing with the Lunchbox. Being out of work.... this helps a lot!"



Secondary benefits to the community as a result of the Lunchbox program.

- Increased public awareness of the need for support of food insecure families during the summer months and the role that United Way plays in addressing this basic need in our Jackson county communities.
- Increased utilization of the Bookmobile and its summer reading program which helps students maintain reading skills and improve academic achievement.
- The Bookmobile/Lunchbox distribution has created a gathering point for building relationships and fostering community in a demographic that lacks social opportunities.

The biggest challenges that the Lunchbox program has faced in the first half of the program have been those common to any new endeavor. While we lacked experience and everything was a bit of trial and error, there has been a firm commitment to teamwork and growth. Great improvements have been made as we strive to serve the clients as efficiently, effectively and respectfully as possible.

#### **Financial Reporting:**

As of July 15, 2014, \$4,697.17 has been paid out to Harvesters for food. Two additional shipments totalling \$2,802.83 will be received in July and reflected on the August statement. The weekly average value of the boxes is \$6.13. Outside of the UWGT grant, no additional funds have been received to purchase food for the boxes, however, the administration, handling and distribution of the Lunchbox program has been 100% volunteer. The Lunchbox has been able to serve 100% of the people who have requested assistance and currently there is no waiting list.

## Set-Up for Lunchbox Store Room

